CAPTAIN GEORGE'S

Penny Dreadful

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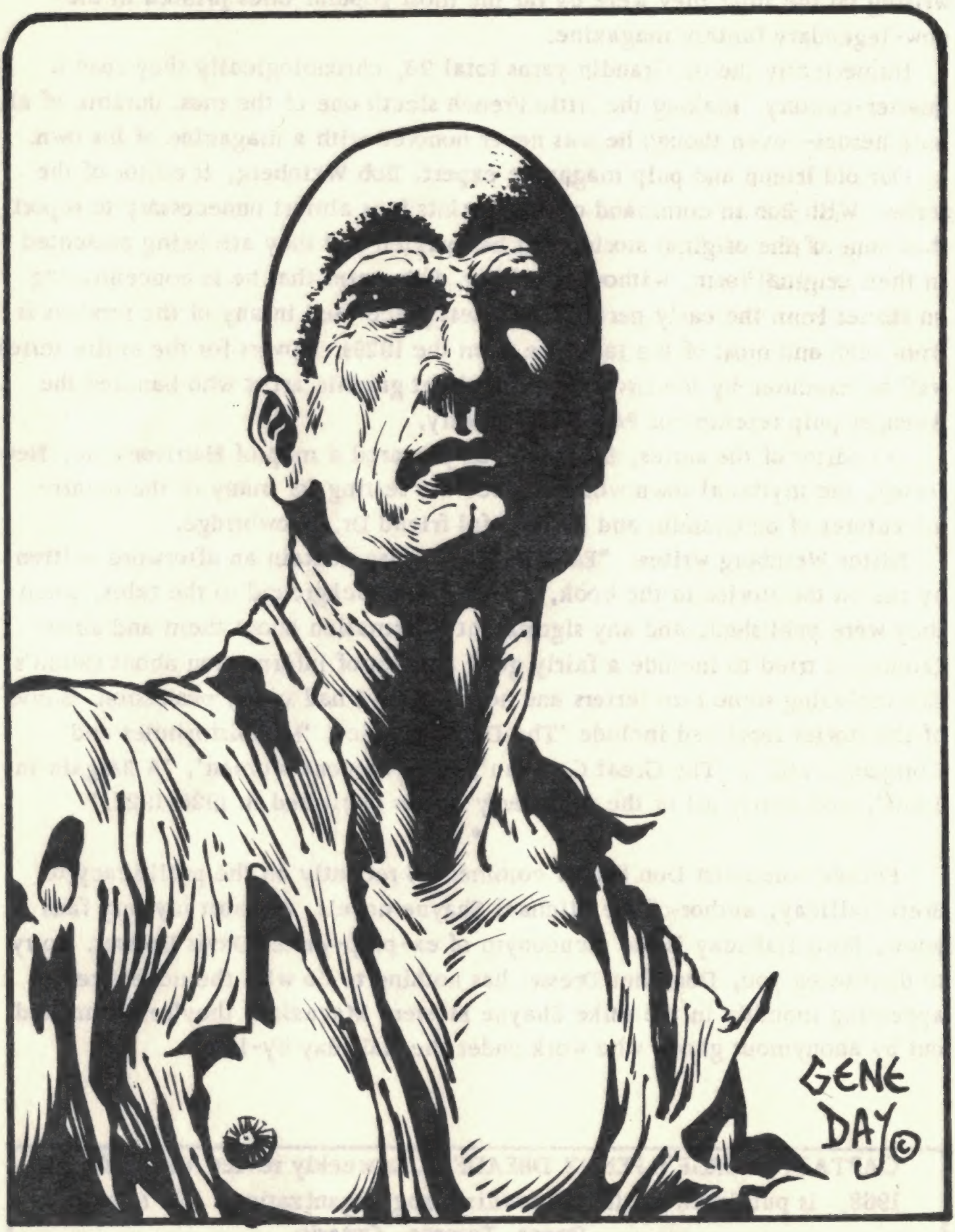

A WEEKLY REVIEW

DON HUTCHISON

Sometime this month Popular Library will begin issuing a new series of paperbacks featuring the adventures of Jules de Grandin, the popular occult detective who roamed the sinister pages of the old Weird Tales pulp magazine from 1926 right up into the late 40s. The de Grandin stories were all written by Seabury Quinn, the editor of a mortician's journal who did his Weird Tales writing on the side; they were by far the most popular tales printed in the now-legendary fantasy magazine.

Numerically the de Grandin yarns total 93, chronologically they span a quarter-century, making the little French sleuth one of the most durable of all pulp heroes--even though he was never honored with a magazine of his own.

Our old friend and pulp magazine expert, Bob Weinberg, is editor of the series. With Bob in command of the reprints it is almost unnecessary to report that none of the original stories will be updated and they are being presented in their original form, without rewriting. Bob states that he is concentrating on stories from the early period; the latest piece used in any of the reprints is from 1935 and most of the tales are from the 1920s. Covers for the entire series will be executed by Joe Gross, the excellent graphic artist who handled the Avenger pulp reprints for Paperback Library.

As editor of the series, Bob has even prepared a map of Harrisonville, New Jersey, the mythical town which formed the setting for many of the bizarre adventures of de Grandin and his faithful friend Dr. Trowbridge.

Editor Weinberg writes: "Each book will also contain an afterword written by me on the stories in the book, giving some background to the tales, when they were published, and any significant information about them and about Quinn... I tried to include a fairly good amount of information about Quinn's life including some rare letters and notes which I had in my possession. Some of the stories reprinted include 'The Devil-People', 'Mephistopholes and Company, Ltd.', 'The Great God Pan', 'The Serpent Woman', 'A Bargain in Souls', and nearly all of the very early stories published in 1926-1927."

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Fellow columnist Don Miller commented recently on the prolificacy of Brett Halliday, author of the Michael Shayne novels. As most mystery fans know, Brett Halliday is the pseudonym of ex-pulp-writer Davis Dresser. Sorry to disillusion you, Don, but Dresser has nothing to do with the novelettes appearing monthly in the Mike Shayne Mystery Magazine; they're all hacked out by anonymous ghosts who work under the Halliday by-line.

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GUEST COLUMN

BY C.M. PARKHURST

The July issue of The Big Reel, an ad-zine for film collectors, contains an article on the formation of the Movie Cowboy Association which lists as one of its aims "to regulate promotion of its members for the many western festivals held throughout the country and to prevent the advertising by innuendo that certain stars will appear at festivals when they were not invited to attend--either for free or for pay."

So far this year there have been three western festivals--during January in Orlando, June in Los Angeles and July in Nashville. In addition, film collectors conventions were held in Houston, Dallas, Memphis and New York City.

On the surface, this is a noble mission. From personal experience, I know of nothing to match the disappointment of film fans who have juggled vacation time, travelled hundreds or thousands of miles (some came from Ottawa and Bristol, England) only to be told in Nashville, "Linda Stirling, Sloan Nibley, Richard Martin and Elaine Riley couldn't make it."

But, hidden in the Movie Cowboy Association fine print is a further aim which is not in the best interest of the film fans--to establish "monetary returns on behalf of its members for all personal appearances, film festivals, posters, photo reproductions sold, traded or whatever."

The dealers room at a convention is as important as the films and guest stars. Over the years, the people who buy, sell and trade films and movie memorabilia have become valued friends. There, you can see the merchandise or films before buying, an advantage no mail order dealer will give.

The fans pay up to $20 admission to the festivals and the dealers pay a fee to rent table space. This is the money that should be used to pay stars' fees. To ask dealers to pay a percentage of their earnings is unreasonable, since it would result in dealers raising their prices, thus bringing lower sales and, perhaps, in the long run, the end of collectors conventions.

ON THE COVER: Gene Day's version of Doc Savage.
Gene is publisher and editor of Dark Fantasy--The Magazine Of Underground Creators which features fiction and art by both professional and up-and-coming new talents. Dark Fantasy, which has just published its eighth issue, is available ($3 for three issues) from Gene at House of Shadows, Box 207, Gananoque, Ont., Canada K7G 2T7.

PETE HARRIS

MOVIE CRAZY: The "B" Western Wing of the Toronto Serial Society is indebted to Don Miller for pointing the way to a thoroughly enjoyable movie experience at a recent screening session. Because, it was in his new book, Hollywood Corral, that Don mentioned a Charles Starrett western called Two Fisted Sheriff (Columbia, 1937) which featured a heavy played by Allan Sears. Now, Sears was an unknown quantity to us, so we had to take a look. Interestingly enough, Sears, as an authentic crazy named Laughing Bill Slagg, doesn't show up until the last half of the movie which, up to that point, is your average enjoyable Charles Starrett "B" western. But, the moment that Sears appears on the screen, looking like a cross between Lon Chaney in West of Zanzibar and Boris Karloff in The Lost Patrol, the movie suddenly becomes something entirely different as Sears projects an unsettling brand of screen madness.

Sears, incidentally, also appeared in Trapped (Columbia, 1937) and Cattle Raiders (Columbia, 1938), both with Starrett; Revenge Rider and Justice Of The Range, both 1935 Columbia releases with Tim McCoy, and Singing Vagabond (Republic, 1935) with Gene Autry. Earlier, he appeared in Secrets, a 1933 melodrama directed by Frank Borzage and starring Mary Pickford and Leslie Howard.

Don's Hollywood Corral inspired another choice for our session--The Thrill Hunter, a 1933 Columbia directed by George B. Seitz and starring Buck Jones in a role that, for most of the film, definitely went against all the accepted (and usually inaccurate) cliches about "B" westerns. In fact, the next guy who talks disparagingly about the movie cowboy kissing his horse and other such canards should be forced to watch The Thrill Hunter which spoofs almost everything Buck Jones usually represented on the screen.

Jones portrays Buck Crosby, a braggart and a downright liar whose claims of sundry aviation, auto-racing and western heroics lead a movie company to sign him up as its new leading man. There are some priceless moments, with Jones playing the role to the hilt, but none more priceless than the scene in which a group of scruffy cowboy extras give Buck and his brand-new movie-cowboy finery several loud, moist razzberries and the mocking cry, in unison, "Our hero!"

Another Buck Jones western with a movie background that I'd like to see is Hollywood Roundup (Columbia, 1937) in which he portrays Buck Kennedy, cowboy stuntman and double for a conceited western star played by Grant Withers. Maybe next time.

Getting back to our last session, we also saw a 1944 Pete Smith Specialties short called Movie Pests in which Dave O'Brien and company demonstrate the ways in which thoughtless numbskulls can ruin other theatre patrons' enjoyment of films. Clyde Gilmour of The Toronto Star has often written caustically of such clods and Movie Pests, which received an Oscar nomination, is a film right in keeping with his sentiments.